



CA STATE SPECIAL
SCHOOLS

Braille Bites

California School for the Blind

VOLUME 2, EDITION 1

FEBRUARY 2011

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

A.P.E. News 2

Ano Nuevo Trip 3

Tom Torlakson 4

Calling all bird listeners 5

Me and my eyes 7

Student Spotlight 9

Scout Trip 10

Superintendent's message

By: Stuart Wittenstein, Ed.D.

Inaugurate: to induct an official into office with a formal ceremony; to make a formal beginning; start

In January 2011, a formal beginning was made for a new state superintendent of public instruction. Tom Torlakson took office and CSB was there for his inauguration in the persons of our jazz ensemble. Tom and his wife Mae met each of the student musicians shook their hands, learned their names, and were completely present with them for those few minutes. It was an auspicious beginning. Within these pages you will read more about Superintendent Torlakson, his background and his goals for education in California.

Also, within the pages of the Braille Bites you will read about Braille (of course!) and elements of the specialized expanded core curriculum (ECC) for children who are blind and visually impaired. This ECC included essential activities for students whose vision loss has interfered with their ability to learn about their world casually through



observation. Specific and systematic instruction must take place in order for these students to gain the concepts which sighted individuals take for granted. We can level the learning and playing field for our blind students, but only if we provide them with the ECC.

Read the Braille Bites and learn about elements of the ECC like art, adapted physical education, independent living skills, outdoor and environmental education, empowerment and self-knowledge skills, service learning and giving within their community, and of course braille literacy – but it these other activities which gives the braille reader the context to understand the content of their reading. Otherwise, braille might be just words on a page.

Adapted Physical Education (A.P.E.) News

By: Mary Alice Ross

The transition students are enjoying ice-skating at Dublin Iceland. For some students, this is a very challenging physical activity. Several students use a skate aid (like a walker) on the ice. Other students hold onto the wall for support and some students use their cane on the ice. Several of the students have become excellent ice skaters. One student uses a wheelchair on the ice and she has learned to push the right wheel forward and the left wheel backwards, resulting in a spin on ice!



We encourage families to take the students skating on the weekend for extra practice. One parent told me that she was going to buy her son a pair of ice skates because he enjoys it so much. Ice-skating runs for two months, Jan 3 – Feb 25th, 2011.

In the pool, the younger students in the Education program are learning the basics of kayaking. Recently, a group of visiting teachers from Oakland enjoyed a kayaking demonstration by two students in Holly Hody's class. James demonstrated the forward stroke the width of the pool. Sebastian was able to paddle the kayak the entire length of the pool. He was able to turn the kayak around in the deep end, before heading back to the shallow end of the pool. The visiting teachers were very impressed with James and Sebastian. Congratulations on a job well done.

CSB Education Foundation Update

By: Sharon Sacks

Get ready, get set, GO! The CSB Education Foundation (CSBEF) is ready to be launched. In the next month look for information about the Foundation's inaugural event. CSBEF is planning to sponsor a **walk-a-thon** for students, staff, and friends of CSB. Get your walking shoes ready. Start pounding the pavement. We need your support to raise money for our school. We are excited about starting CSBEF, and hope everyone will join in with generous donations and great support for our students and our school. Look for pledge sheets, and start thinking about sponsoring a student or a program. We are very excited!!! Join the Fun.



Students Take to The Dunes

By: Cheryl Besden

On January 5 nineteen students from **CSB** participated in a special trip to Año Nuevo State Reserve on the coast near Pescadero. This is where Northern Elephant Seals come up onto the mainland and give birth, nurse and mate during the winter season. Hiking over sand dunes, the students listened for the famous trumpeting sound of the male elephant seals and for the gentle calls of the mothers and pups. Students who use monoculars were able to view these large marine mammals. Specially trained docents guided students so they were safe – elephant seals can move 18 feet in 3 seconds and there are no cages or ropes!! The docents prepared teaching tools that allowed students to compare the sizes of the different sexes and ages.

One of our own graduates, Kim P., is a docent at Año Nuevo. She led the tour, assuring our students understood what they were hearing and feeling. By the time students returned to the parking lot, all were hungry – those bag lunches sure tasted good.



The most important thing students learned is that a visual impairment should never prevent one from enjoying the outdoors and learning about our natural world. And...this reserve belongs to all of us. Check out the website and plan a visit of your own – you will surely be amazed.

New State Superintendent of Public Instruction - Tom Torlakson

Tom Torlakson was elected to a four-year term as California's 27th State Superintendent of Public Instruction on November 2, 2010. As chief of California's public school system and leader of the California Department of Education, Superintendent Torlakson applies his experience as a science teacher, high school coach, and state policymaker to fight for our students and improve our state's public education system.



Torlakson's journey has led him from the classrooms of Contra Costa County's Mount Diablo Unified School District (where he remains a teacher-on-leave), to the Antioch City Council, Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors, and the California State Senate and State Assembly.

During his tenure in the California State Legislature, Torlakson acted to protect education funding, improve student nutrition and physical education, and ensure school safety. He also championed legislation to increase funding for textbooks, computers, and other instructional materials and efforts to close the digital divide, eliminate the achievement gap, and reduce the dropout rate.

In 1998 Torlakson authored legislation leading to the development of the largest system of after school programs in the nation. In 2006, he authored the bill that led to a 300 percent expansion in these programs—so they now reach 4,000 schools around the state. Torlakson authored the Quality Education Improvement Act (SB 1133) in 2006, which dedicates nearly \$3 billion to our lowest performing schools. He also played a key role negotiating and authoring the \$9 billion Proposition 1A bond measure in 1998—which has led to public votes supporting over \$36 billion to build new schools and improve existing school buildings.

As the chair and founder of the California Task Force on Youth and Workplace Wellness, Torlakson has been a leader on banning junk food from our schools, providing healthier school meals, promoting student health and fitness, and combating diabetes and obesity among our children.

Born in San Francisco, Tom served as a fireman in the United States Merchant Marine, earning the Vietnam Service Medal. He earned a B.A. in History, a Life Secondary Teaching Credential, and an M.A. in Education from the University of California, Berkeley.

Calling all bird listeners!

By: Alysa Chadow

Students wanting to help their community, be outdoors, and learn more about the environment will have an exciting opportunity to do all three the weekend of April 29, at Enchanted Hills Camp.

I am in the beginning stages of designing a weekend of bird listening for 5-6 students from our school. The plan is to have the students listen for, and then record, the bird sounds that they hear, and then submit the data to the Napa-Solano chapter of the National Audubon Society.

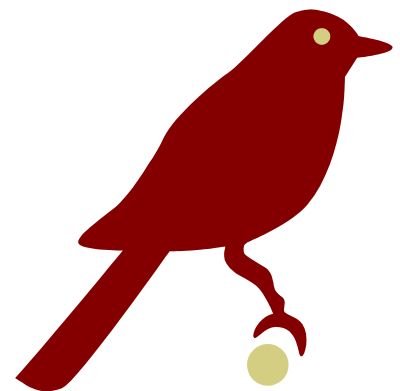
According to the N-SNAS's website, there is a large variety of bird species in the area. Students will be put into teams of either two or three, and then spend an hour at selected sites around the camp. They will listen carefully for previously chosen bird calls, which they will then record either with an electronic note-taker, or tactual materials. The kids may spend time at up to three or four different sites throughout the two-day period.

There are even more advantages for students working on this program. Team work, cooperation, problem solving, and speech and language-all of which are part of our expanded core curriculum-will be used in full force.

The Transition Summit will be taking place at the same time at EHC. I am therefore looking for students from our education program. The only criterion is an interest in what we will be doing. Please have any interested students contact me directly at Extension 233. I will also be asking Tony Fletcher (with whom I am working on getting this program together) to publicize it from his end. Yes, there will be a cost (hopefully a minimal one), and yes, the kids will have to write about their experiences afterwards.

By the way-did I mention that students will have an awful lot of fun, too?

(AUTHOR'S NOTE: The date for this program has been moved up to either the kids' or teenagers' session at EHC this July/August. Whatever the age group that ultimately participates in bird listening, students will still be required to record their experiences, but with a twist-they can blog, videotape, or even post to Facebook.)



Learning to live on your own

By: Marcia Vickroy

The **C**alifornia **S**chool for the **B**lind has several programs to help meet the needs of its students. There is one that provides independent living experience to the students prior to living on their own. This program is headed by Ann Linville, Director of Transition Services. Working with the Director is teacher, Marcia Vickroy and counselors Roger Klette and Staci Gonzales.

The Apartment Living Program (ALP) is an educational program in a residential setting. It provides the students the opportunity to learn first hand how it will feel to stay on their own within a budget, make and follow a daily schedule, learn how to use a bill paying program such as Quicken, and develop a recreational program that will provide some sort of physical exercise twice a week. If that wasn't enough the students are responsible for doing their own laundry, cooking or learning how to cook their own meals, shopping for all supplies for their apartment including food while managing their money safely and developing a daily schedule so there will be time for hanging out with their friends or planning trips off campus. Oh, and did I mention these students must have the skills to independently travel off campus using public transportation to places of interest – Whew!

Currently there are 7 students in the Apartment Living Program and they are doing a great job learning all the skills they need to be the best they can be. As their teacher, I cannot think of a more cohesive group that works so wonderfully together. They all have worked very hard to develop their skills for independent living and they make the ALP staff and **CSB** proud.

Please visit our program when you're on campus and maybe it will be on a day when the students are making dessert :)



Me and my eyes

By: Francey Liefert

Gina Ouellette, school psychologist, and Francey Liefert, coordinating teacher of low vision services, are starting Spring sessions of Me and My Eyes, a course full of information about how the eye works and what can cause visual impairment. The elementary level group includes Delena Cook's students, Travis N., Jack G., Drew and Abby, as well as Sebastian from Holly Hody's class. The transition group will include Joseph, Randy, Cody and Victor for the next eight weeks.

The elementary students have already learned the names of their eye conditions and how to spell the tricky Greek names most eye conditions have. They are beginning to create models of the eye using rubber balls. Each student will be bringing home a model of the eye to share with their friends and to amaze their relatives. They have also begun eye portfolios that will contain information about their own eyes, their eye care professionals and the accommodations that are helpful to them at school and at home.



Ingredients of the eye model

In addition to learning information, we will have the opportunity to do some role-playing and brain storming about various situations where people might ask the students about their vision. Some may be times when the student would rather not talk about being blind or visually impaired, and we'll come up with ways to handle those with discretion, humor or polite refusal to enter the discussion. We'll also bring up times when a doctor or teacher needs to know specific information in order to give the student the best service possible. Other role-playing may include situations when a student is being teased or treated rudely in public. Gina will guide the role-playing and conversation toward creative explorations of both feelings about these situations and possible ways to handle them.

Dear Staff and Students,

The students of Ms. Tanaka's class would like to thank you for all the donations this year. The people who work at Tri-City Animal Shelter and Food Bank appreciate your donations as well as the recipients. We hope you had a fantastic break. Again, our class would like to thank you for your generosity. We are looking forward to the drive next school year.

Sincerely,
DJ, Robin, Travis, Theadora, Andrea
and Joe



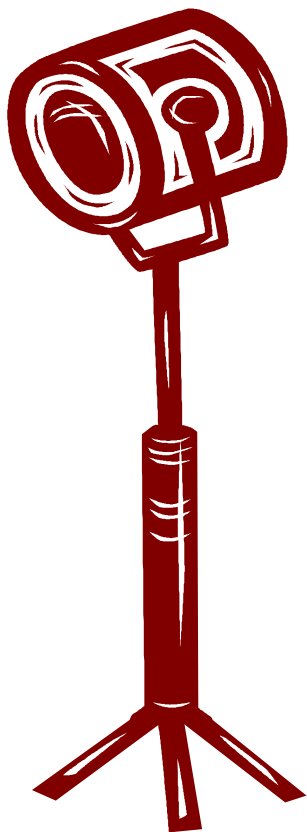
31,000 Braille Pages Read At CSB!!!!

Ann Gelles, Braille Teacher

CSB students participated in the yearly National Federation for the Blind Braille Readers Are Leaders Contest. The contest ran from November through January 4th. This contest attempts to promote Braille literacy and a love for reading using Braille.

Twenty-seven **CSB** students signed up for the 2010 NFB Readers Are Leaders Contest. Altogether they read 31,559 Braille pages. Our top five Olympian Readers for 2010 are Jonathan reading 15,754 pages, Abby reading 5,706 pages, Jennifer reading 1,607 pages, Alissa reading 1,287 pages and Andrea reading 1,040 pages. Participants will enjoy a pizza party to celebrate their reading achievements hosted by the National Federation for the Blind in the near future. Way to go **CSB!!!**

The **CSB** Braille Bee was on February 17th.. There was a total of 45 students who participated in various levels of Braille. Everyone who participated received an award of recognition. Congratulations to all!!



Student Spotlight With Alissa



Q: Why did you decide to take drawing classes?

A: I used to trace cover artwork of video tape cases and would compare it to the original and I became interested in drawing. My dad found an art class in San Juan Capistrano. I take classes there every other Saturday. I learn to blend colors, shading, 3D art and shapes.

Q: What is your favorite thing to draw?

A: I like to draw really anything, but my favorite things to draw are animals, sceneries and people.

Q: What are some of your other hobbies?

A: Besides drawing I also listen to music and I sing.

Q: How long have you attended CSB?

A: This will be my second full year here at CSB.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to say?

A: At age 3, I started scribbling, and it has always felt good to have something in my hand to draw with.

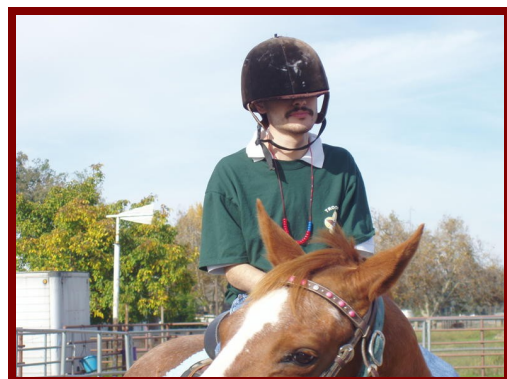


Scouting Trip

The Scouts enjoyed an outing in November , on November 12th through the 14th. The scouts enjoyed working on a farm, picking vegetables, planting vegetables, feeding various farm animals and driving a tractor with assistance. They also enjoyed horseback riding, a hay ride and singing songs.

The meals on this outing were enjoyed by all including: vegetables they hand picked, ravioli, garlic bread, fresh eggs for egg salad sandwiches and a Thanksgiving dinner on Saturday night to close things out.

A good time was had by all.



If you would like to contribute a future article for Braille Bites, please send it to: jrudder@csb-cde.ca.gov